

CITY OF HOUSTON PLANNING COMMISSION
LONG RANGE ISSUES COMMITTEE
October 26, 2005

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In its initial meeting, the committee focused on the definition of long range issues and the development of a defining theme for guidance through the committee effort. "Promoting economic development while improving quality of life" was adopted as our unifying theme. The thrust of the following meetings was therefore intended to be the development of policy recommendations to support this theme.

Within the discussion, the use of special districts as the tool to accomplish the goal was considered as well as the need for a database that documents the existing development, planned improvements, and demographics of the City and that could be used in the identification of new development opportunities.

As the discussion matured, we focused on the need for comprehensive planning and the definition of strategic issues that are critical to the growth of Houston. As part of the effort, a sub-committee was formed which revised Chapter 33 of the City Code of Ordinances addressing the development of a comprehensive plan (attached).

Subsequent to the consideration of the revised ordinance, we then re-focused on the definition of the three issues that we considered to be critical to the City's growth success.

- City needs an ongoing, long term transportation focus on planning, agency coordination, scheduling, and identification and securing of funding opportunities.
- City needs an economic growth strategy to promote value growth of its property and sales tax bases while serving the needs of the community in housing and services. The development of a GIS database to document the current level of development and currently planned capital improvements can provide a tool to

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identify opportunities and to coordinate the activities of the overlapping governmental agencies that serve the City.

- City needs a focus on long term infrastructure planning to work with other agencies on issues such as integration of the storm sewer drainage system with the open channel drainage system, joint use of detention/drainage facilities, and landscape/beautification standards for a hierarchy of the roadway system. This effort would consider scheduling, financial partnerships, and need into the development of the programs. A change in the format of the Capital Improvements Program to provide for a significant portion of the CIP to be dedicated to program goals (potentially over a period longer than five years) and a smaller component programmed to respond to citizen identified needs (SNAP – super neighborhood action plans) is recommended for consideration.

The City may want to consider not imbedding these functions within the operational duties of a department of the City because they will have the tendency to be deferred as the demands of day to day problems take precedence. Instead, the City's leadership may want to consider having these functions report through a body such as the Planning Commission or another policy body and then to the City Council and Mayor similar to the process defined for the impact fee adoption and the major thoroughfare plan adoption.